

OrdnanceReports

News updates from around the world



July 2, 2003



This publication is produced by the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Communications Coordinator. The purpose of this publication is to provide Command Information materiel concerning world events and the U.S. military's role in those events. Ordnance specific events will be covered if appropriate. Direct your correspondence to Ed Starnes at 410-278-2415 (DSN 298-2415), or email edward.starnes@ocs.apg.army.mil.

Unexploded ordnance prompt mine awareness

by Pfc. Christina Carde, U.S. Army

BAGRAM, Afghanistan - As renovations continue to improve the quality of life for troops on Bagram, the reconstruction process has been digging up more than just rocks and rubble.

An unexploded ordnance, known as UXO, was found outside of the Base Operations building June 29, making it the second one to be discovered in the past week.

"Someone passing in front of Base Ops found a 115mm high explosive Russian projectile round sticking out of the sidewalk while walking on Disney (Drive) Sunday," said Staff Sgt. Barri Peterson, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team leader, 797th Ordnance Company, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. "The round was defused, but we found a high explosive fuse by Viper City last week."

As soon as EOD was notified, they went to work on removing the round.

"We first checked to see if the round was fused or defused and then proceeded to remove it from the ground," said Peterson. "The round is being held and will be destroyed (tomorrow), with other UXOs."

According to 1st Sgt. Gilbert Rodriguez, company first sergeant, more UXOs and mines are being discovered in the "cleared" areas on Bagram due to reconstruction.

"The more improvements are made, the more UXOs are going to be discovered," said Rodriguez. "We don't know how many more are buried out there, but as long as the reconstruction process continues, we are sure we are going to be getting more calls about UXOs in the populated areas."

Even though mines and UXOs are still out there, Rodriguez said there are ways troops can protect themselves and take the proper precautions.

"If an area looks as if no one has walked through it in quite some time, stay clear of it," said Rodriguez. "Don't cross any wires around

the perimeter that have been set up to keep people out, and heed signs and markings that indicate mines are in the area."

If someone comes across a UXO or mine in a populated area, they should first do two things.

"The first thing that someone should do if they encounter a UXO is make sure people stay out of the area," said Rodriguez. "Mark the area where the UXO is located or leave someone behind with the ordnance while the military police or base operations are called."

"Once EOD has been called, people need to stay out of the area that is being cleared," added Peterson. "It makes our job much easier when all we have to

concentrate on is the UXO and not the number of people in the area."

According to Rodriguez, being unaware of the situation is what causes accidents.

"Afghanistan is still one of the five top countries in the world for land mine concentration and troops need to be aware of this while performing their daily duties," said Rodriguez. "The situation is still very hazardous and troops need to proceed with caution even when walking in areas that have already been cleared. You never know when something may pop up."



Fallujah mosque explosion tied to bomb-making class

by Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, July 2, 2003 –A bomb manufacturing class being taught inside the Al Hasan Mosque in Fallujah was apparently the cause of the early July 1 explosion there, according to U.S. Central Command officials.

Coalition forces had no involvement in the incident, according to an ongoing investigation by coalition troops and local police. U.S. 3rd Infantry Division troops had responded to the incident after a U.S. aircraft had notified officials about the blast, according to CENTCOM.

In other news, one of six American troops wounded during July 1 anti-coalition attacks in Iraq has died, according to a CENTCOM news release.

Assailants attacked the soldier's convoy – which was traveling through Baghdad — with an improvised explosive device, the release noted.

The soldier — a member of the Army's 352nd Civil Affairs Command – was evacuated to the 28th Combat Support Hospital for medical treatment, but succumbed to his wounds. Two other troops were injured in the attack.

The name of the deceased soldier is being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Three other Americans serving in Iraq were wounded July 1 in a separate incident, according to Combined Joint Task Force 7 officials.



Locals crowd around the al-Hassan mosque in Fallujah, Iraq, Wednesday July 2, 2003. A blast in a building in the courtyard the mosque killed 10 Iraqis and wounded four late Monday, said Col. Guy Shields, spokesman for the U.S. military in Baghdad. Iraqis insisted the blast was caused by a U.S. missile – an account the military denied. (AP Photo/Saurabh Das)



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U.S. soldiers take defensive positions at a checkpoint in Baghdad. American troops were the targets of three attacks, soldiers killed four Iraqis in Baghdad, and an explosion killed at least five people yesterday at a mosque in rebellious Fallujah. (AP photo)

White House ceremony marks 30 years of all-volunteer force

by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, July 1, 2003 — With right hands and voices raised, 30 military personnel from each branch of the armed forces repeated the oath of re-enlistment in the White House East Room today.

This re-enlistment ceremony marked the 30th anniversary of the all-volunteer force. Presiding over the event was Commander in Chief George W. Bush. Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, read the oath.

The White House ceremony was one of many held throughout the Defense Department on this special day. Enlistment ceremonies were also held at 65 Military Entrance Processing Stations throughout the United States.

The all-volunteer force began when the draft ended June 30, 1973.

The White House event was a special not only to the participants, but also for the spectators in the room. Emma Gjiya traveled from New York City to Washington to see her brother re-enlist. She said that she was proud of him.

Her brother, Marine Cpl. Guyp Tchoumba, with the Military Security Force Battalion in Norfolk, Va., said he re-enlisted because he loves the United States. "The history, the people, are just wonderful," he observed. Tchoumba recently became a U.S. citizen. He and his sister are from the African Republic of Cameroon.

He also pointed out that he re-enlisted because he "felt he didn't give enough" during his first four years of service. But most importantly, he said he wanted to be a part of the United States Marines who "have a job to finish."

Air Force Staff Sgt. Kimberly Scott re-enlisted because she loves the Air Force and because of the "pride you feel when you put on the United States Air Force uniform."

The president addressed an audience populated with a mix of service members, their families and Pentagon leaders. Bush told them that in the past 30 years the country has seen the "great advantages of a military in which all serve by their own decision."

"Our country's all-volunteer force attracts idealistic and committed young Americans. They stay in service longer because they have chosen the military life," he said.

"The result is a military with the highest level of training and experience, motivation and professionalism." He added that military life is rewarding, but even at its best "that life is difficult."



President Bush looked on as service members raised their right hands and voices while Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, administered the oath of re-enlistment. Thirty service members renewed their terms of service during a July 1 White House ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the all-volunteer force. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample.

He said that serving in the military often involves separation and danger, "those who willingly make these sacrifices and the families who share their hardships have the respect and the gratitude of their fellow Americans."

The president also told the audience that today's military is serving in one of history's "most critical hours," reminding them that the terrorists who attacked Sept. 11, 2001, made clear their intentions to strike again.

"As long as terrorists and their allies plot to harm America, this country will be at war," Bush said. "We did not choose this war, yet with the safety of the American people at stake, we will continue to wage this war with all our might."

The president also used the occasion to outline the importance of a volunteer force and how it has led to successes in the global war on terrorism as well as the liberation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

He said that from the beginning, "we have known the effort would be long and difficult, and that our resolve would be tested. We know that sacrifice is unavoidable."

"We have seen victories in the decisive defeat of two terror regimes and in the relentless pursuit of a global terror network. Yet the war

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U.S. tells Iraqi towns to stop insurgents

by Borzou Daragahi

AS SADAH, Iraq (AP) - Shrouded in early morning mist, U.S. tanks, Humvees and Apache helicopters roared into the town of As Sadah

White House ceremony marks 30 years of all-volunteer force continued



President Bush, center, and, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, right, pose for a group photo during a ceremony for the Presidential Reenlistment of Military Service Members Tuesday, July 1, 2003 in Washington. The ceremony marked the 30th anniversary of the US military's all-volunteer force. Speaking at the ceremony, President Bush worked to reassure the nation that despite mounting American deaths in Iraq, U.S. troops still are needed there to keep the nation

on terror goes on. We will not be distracted, and we will prevail," he said.

Of the 230,000 military serving inside and near Iraq, the president said, "As commander in chief, I will assure them we will stay on the offensive against the enemy and all who attack our troops will be met with direct and decisive force."

"As America fights our war against terror, we will continue to depend on the skill and courage of our volunteer military," Bush noted.

He said the re-enlistees were answering the "highest call of citizenship. They have stood between the American people and the dangers of the world and we are glad they are staying on duty." "In these last 22 months, our armed forces have been tested and tested again," he said. "In every case, in every mission, America's servicemen and women have brought credit to the uniform, to our flag, and to our country. We have needed you, and you have never let us down." "I want to thank you for keeping your pledge of duty to America, and thank you for renewing that demanding pledge today."

to deliver a message: Don't let insurgents use your town to attack American forces.

The operation, dubbed Sidewinder, was part of a sweep across central Iraq from the border with Iran to the areas north of Baghdad. It netted one suspected militant and several small caches of weapons.

In all, military officials say they have arrested more than 300 suspects since Sunday in Sidewinder and other operations, but no major fugitives of Saddam Hussein's fallen regime.

"The purpose of the operation is to go in and let the local community know that we will not tolerate their complacency or support for the attacks," Lt. Col. Mark Young, a 4th Infantry battalion commander, said. "We've been repeatedly attacked from the main road. We will not tolerate that."

After dispatching a pair of reconnaissance patrols Monday and establishing a security cordon around As Sadah, four M-1 tanks, two armored personnel carriers and about 10 Humvees entered the village at dawn Tuesday, broadcasting Arab-language warnings to residents to stay inside.

While a pair of Apache helicopters hovered overhead, soldiers stepped out of their vehicles to scour yards and follow up on tips. Searches yielded several AK-47 assault rifles, an anti-tank gun and bags of ammunition.

One town elder, Sheikh Waleed Kareem al-Jailani, insisted outsiders, not locals, were responsible for attacks on U.S. troops that have happened frequently in recent days. He suggested Kurds from northern Iraq - who sided with the United States in the war against Saddam - might have caused the trouble.

Young responded bluntly: "I think it's local people coming to the road, shooting at us and going back home."

Several times during the raid, Young pulled aside local leaders and - through the battalion's Arab translator - warned them they would be viewed with suspicion until the attacks stopped.

"Everyone we meet claims to be innocent," Young told The Associated Press. "Everyone claims it's someone else from another village. But it's the local village and local villagers that allow the attacks to take place."

A swelling insurgency has seen several attacks on U.S. troops every day recently. That's led some to worry that Iraq could turn into a Vietnam-style political and military quagmire.

Despite the show of weaponry and manpower, townsfolk in As Sadah, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, appeared more bemused than frightened.

Most residents poured into the streets to watch the spectacle,

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Pentagon working on Iraq troop needs

by Pauline Jelenik

WASHINGTON (AP) - Amid renewed violence in Iraq, the Pentagon is trying to figure out how many postwar troops should stay and when it can bring home some of the longest-serving.

No changes in troop strength are planned immediately, particularly while coalition forces are on an offensive to crush fighters who have been increasingly making deadly attacks on American and British forces, defense officials said Tuesday.

Among troops hoping to be finished with Iraq duty are some from the 3rd Infantry Division who had been deployed to the region in September.

They had expected to leave a month ago, but their departure was put on hold because of continued violence and lawlessness. Since that decision was made, attacks on coalition forces have gotten even worse.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has asked commanders to give him a report on the length of time units have been deployed, what rotations are planned, when international forces can be brought in to replace some of the Americans, and how many and what kind of troops are still needed in postwar Iraq.

He said he expects the report within the next two weeks.

Also affecting the decision on troop strength will be the needs of



Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, right, accompanied by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John Warner, R-Va., gestures while meeting reporters on Capitol Hill Friday, June 27, 2003 after attending a closed-door hearing of the committee. Rumsfeld said he wouldn't describe it as guerrilla warfare. But he says certain elements in Iraq are doing things that are "unhelpful" to the US-led coalition and the Iraqi people. (AP Photo/Lisa Nipp)

the commander overseeing the so-far unsuccessful search for weapons of mass destruction, Rumsfeld said. The Bush administration said finding and destroying the weapons was the

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U.S. tells Iraqi towns to stop insurgents continued

ignoring the orders to stay inside. Youngsters cheered with delight at the sight of Apaches twisting and turning in the air and huge tanks maneuvering through town.

"This is very exciting," said Khaled Hussein, an unemployed 21-year-old. "This is the most exciting thing to happen here in a long time."

A giggling girl in a red dress held a doll with one hand outside her house. Young men gave the thumbs-up to passing American vehicles and foot patrols searching the alleyways and yards.

"As long as they don't force their way into homes, we don't mind the Americans," said Yussef Kamal, a 40-year-old butcher.

The American presence didn't excite all the residents of this lush agricultural town. Sulking young men standing away from the crowds frowned at the U.S. forces. One shook his head and walked away when a reporter approached.

At a nearby town on Sunday, an Apache alerted soldiers that a group of men a couple of miles to the north had dropped a bag and fled.

A team took off on foot into the latticework of narrow alleyways along the canals and palm groves. Soldiers stepped carefully along

narrow paths lined with thick vegetation and high walls. They walked past sunflower fields, herb gardens and bushes.

"This is not how I expected Iraq to look," Capt. Lou Morales said as his men peered into doorways and over walls.

Guided by the Apache above and map coordinates below, the soldiers found the plastic bag. It contained about 100 rounds of ammunition, several assault rifle magazines, a wad of cash and jewelry.

Back in the center of town, a man approached the convoy as it was about to leave, and demanded the money and jewelry. Young thought for a moment, and handed the money and jewelry back to the man, worried that seizing them would fuel rumors that Americans were stealing valuables.

Young acknowledged he must navigate tricky cultural waters to establish the most basic facts in the raids.

"There's always the risk of alienating an entire town by blundering in there," he said.

As the American convoy left town three hours after its arrival, the army radio crackled to life: reports of gunfire to the west, reports of gunfire to the east.

Afghan troops fight Taliban near border

by Noor Khan

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) - Afghan government soldiers were trying to flush out Taliban fighters believed to be regrouping in remote mountain peaks near the Pakistan border, army commander Mungal Khan said Wednesday.

A week of sporadic and at times intense fighting in Barai Ghar mountains, in the southeast corner of Zabul province, has left one soldier and a Taliban commander dead, he said.

Khan estimated that as many as 100 Taliban fighters were hiding in the mountains, considered a stronghold of the former Taliban regime, ousted by the U.S.-led coalition in 2001.

There have been dozens of attacks by suspected Taliban fighters in eastern and southern Afghanistan, where Afghanistan's majority Pashtun ethnic group dominates. Most Taliban were Pashtuns.

"We have laid siege to the area to try to arrest the Taliban," Khan said. Both sides have been using heavy machine guns and rockets in the fighting.

Pakistan has deployed thousands of troops along its border with Afghanistan in a bid to prevent remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaida from escaping to its territory.

Elsewhere, a suspected terrorist was killed when a bomb he was planting exploded by accident just east of Kabul, police said Wednesday.

The blast late Tuesday left a seven-foot-wide crater in a dirt road



Afghan National Army soldiers patrol near the site of an explosion in the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, July 2, 2003. A suspected terrorist was killed when a homemade bomb he was planting exploded by accident just east of Afghanistan's on Tuesday night police said. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

nine miles east of Kabul. No other casualties were reported, said Zaher Khan, a police chief in the district.

It was unclear what the slain man was targeting.

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Pentagon working on Iraq troop needs continued

main reason for the war that overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Up to 20,000 international soldiers, to be led by Poland and Britain, will begin flowing into Iraq this month - arriving through September - said Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a Tuesday press conference with Rumsfeld.

More international troops are being sought.

"The more there are, the fewer of U.S. troops we have to have," Rumsfeld said, adding that he didn't know yet whether commanders will say they need more or fewer people in the total coalition in coming months.

"But whatever it is, we will fill in with as many international forces as we can, and we will then be able to rotate some of our forces out and

give them a rest."

Myers said there are just under 150,000 U.S. troops and a little over 12,000 coalition troops in Iraq.

The United States months ago asked nations for contributions to the war, including 70 countries that were asked to contribute stabilization troops. Only 24 have committed to do so and talks continue with a dozen others, officials said.

They refused to name the countries or say exactly what they are contributing. But NATO sources said last month that they include Hungary, Bulgaria, Honduras, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Spain, Ukraine, Slovakia, Denmark and Italy, with some sending as little as several hundred troops and others sending 1,000 or 2,000.

North Korea asserts right to make and sell missiles

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea's ruling party newspaper on Wednesday dismissed U.S. criticism of its missile exports as interference in the communist state's internal affairs, saying the arms sales were legitimate commerce.

The commentary by the Rodong Sinmun daily came amid renewed focus on North Korea's sales of weapons of mass production and a fresh flurry of diplomatic consultations aimed at halting Pyongyang's attempts to build nuclear weapons.

Also on Wednesday, South Korea confirmed it would host ministerial talks with North Korea next week, but said the eleventh round of cabinet-level talks since 2000 would be scaled down in view of the lack of progress on the nuclear dispute.

And North Korea's army announced that despite the tensions, it had accepted a U.S. proposal for working-level talks on excavating and repatriating the remains of some of the 8,000 American soldiers missing since the 1950-53 Korean War.

The Rodong Sinmun, mouthpiece of the ruling Workers Party, rejected U.S. calls to curb sales of ballistic missiles as a "dangerous attempt to bring the DPRK under its control by the allied imperialist forces and international reactionaries."

A Korean-language version of the commentary, published by Seoul's Yonhap news agency, said: "It is recognized as thoroughly legal commerce that meets the legitimate security needs of other countries."

PROLIFERATION CONCERNS

In May, President Bush announced a Proliferation Security Initiative for seizing and searching planes and ships suspected of carrying illegal weapons and missile technology.

Report: North Korea agrees to hold MIA talks

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has accepted a U.S. proposal for new talks on recovering remains of American servicemen missing from the Korean War, the North Korean media said Wednesday.

North Korea's military agreed to the talks "out of humanitarian concern," the North's official news agency KCNA said. It wasn't immediately clear when Washington made the proposal.

More than 8,000 American military personnel are missing from the 1950-53 war. Since 1996, American teams have recovered more than 150 sets of remains believed to be those of American soldiers. Ten were identified and returned to their families for burial.

The news agency's source was a spokesman at the North Korean military's office in the village of Panmunjom. The border town is where the U.S.-led United Nations Command and the North Korean military meet to oversee the armistice that ended the war.

Last month, the United States and 10 other countries met in Madrid to flesh out the U.S. plan to curb missile sales that are a key source of cash for Pyongyang. U.S. allies in Asia also agreed to clamp down on North Korean narcotics trafficking.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday that U.S. intelligence officials believe North Korea is developing technology that could make nuclear warheads small enough to be placed atop the country's missiles, which could put Tokyo — and American troops based in Japan — at risk.

Officials who have received U.S. Central Intelligence Agency reports told the newspaper that American satellites have identified an advanced nuclear testing site in an area of North Korea called Yongdoktong.

The information has been shared with Japan, South Korea and other allies in recent weeks, the newspaper said.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's spokesman declined to comment on the report. But local media quoted unnamed South Korean officials as saying Seoul and Washington have suspected, but not confirmed, nuclear work at Yongdoktong for a decade.

The intensified focus on the North Korean weapons comes as U.S. and Asian officials step up contacts on the nuclear dispute, which erupted last October with Pyongyang's admission to U.S. officials that the country has a covert atomic arms program.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Beijing's point man on North Korea is in Washington this week, while South Korea's national security adviser is visiting Beijing.

The exchanges precede South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's tour next week of China, Pyongyang's chief benefactor — to whom Washington and Seoul are looking for help in resolving the nuclear crisis.

There have been no significant contacts between the United States and North Korea since three-way talks in China in April.

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U.S. eyes global strike capability within 2 hours

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Pentagon is seeking to develop a drone in the next two decades that could strike any spot on Earth from the continental United States within two hours.

The so-called Hypersonic Cruise Vehicle, which would be designed to hit targets about 9,000 miles away, should be available by about 2025. Hypersonic means traveling at more than five times the speed of sound.

The goal is to demonstrate a system that could carry out prompt "global reach missions" without using overseas bases, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Pentagon's cradle of new technologies, said in a notice released quietly two weeks ago.

"DARPA and the Air Force share a vision of a new transformational capability that would provide a means of delivering a substantial payload from the continental United States to anywhere on Earth in less than two hours," the notice said.

"This capability would free the U.S. military from reliance on forward basing to enable it to react promptly and decisively to destabilizing or threatening actions by hostile countries and terrorist organizations," said DARPA, which is jointly sponsoring the project with the U.S. Air Force.

Some of the system's building blocks should make it possible to launch a "prompt global strike" from the continental United States as early as about 2010 using rocket boosters, the draft notice said.

The program envisions a reusable, remotely piloted craft that could take off from a regular runway with 12,000 pounds (5,443 kg) of bombs and missiles or a new, rocket-assisted means of delivering such munitions, a draft overview said.

The project is called FALCON, short for Force Application and Launch from CONUS, or the 48 states, excluding Alaska and Hawaii, that make up the continental United States.

Jan Walker, a DARPA spokeswoman, described the effort as "technology development and demonstration," as opposed to a plan to build, buy or deploy such a capability. Any such acquisition plans ultimately hinge on the U.S. Congress's power of the purse.

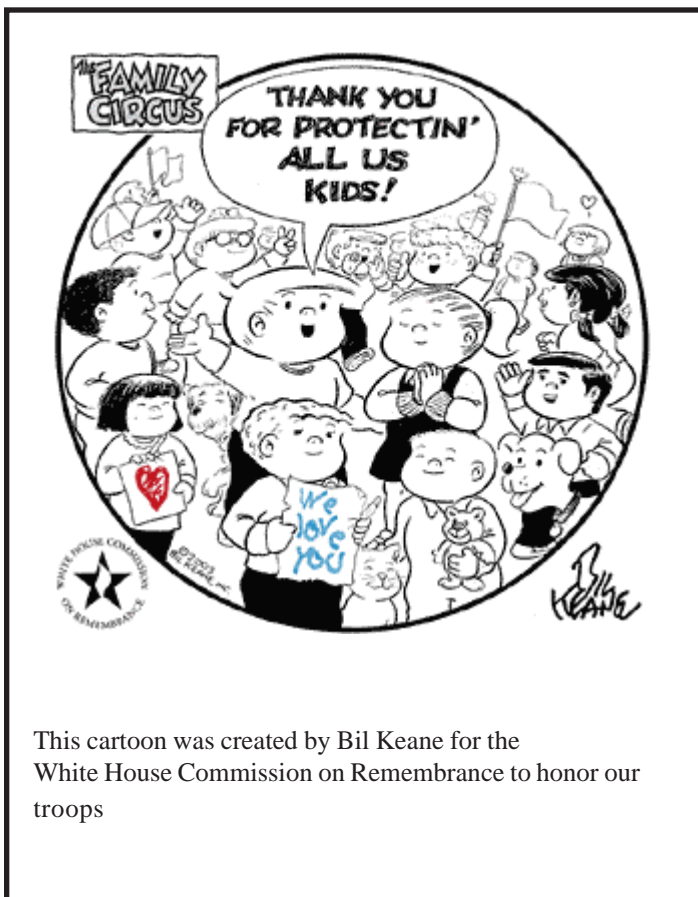
The draft notice cited U.S. military operations in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. "While advancements in target identification and precision strike have been abundantly demonstrated, deficiencies in engaging and defeating time-critical and high-value, hard and deeply buried targets have also been revealed," it said.

The overview said the United States may find it increasingly difficult to use overseas bases to react quickly to perceived threats.

DARPA and the Air Force will host a so-called "Industry Day" on July 8 in Arlington, Virginia, to give contractors interested in the project the big picture, a notice on DARPA's Web site said.



Col. Veselin Sljivancanin is seen during a Yugoslav Army ceremony in this July 1998 file photo. Seeking to relieve political pressure from Washington, Serb authorities Tuesday, July 1, 2003, handed over the colonel wanted by the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal in connection with the massacre of 200 people during war in the Balkans. Sljivancanin, indicted for the 1991 killings near the Croatian town of Vukovar, was flown to The Hague and taken into U.N. custody, tribunal spokesman Jim Landale said. Sljivancanin's arrest last month sparked a night of clashes between dozens of riot police and hardline Serb nationalists who threw rocks and set cars alight. (AP Photo)



This cartoon was created by Bil Keane for the White House Commission on Remembrance to honor our troops

Troops ready if call comes to aid Liberia

by Scott Schonauer, Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain — As American soldiers try to stabilize postwar Iraq, troops at U.S. bases in Europe stand ready to help bring peace to Liberia.

U.S. military commanders are keeping an eye on the increasingly chaotic situation in Liberia, waiting — should they get the order — to join a peacekeeping force in the African hot spot.

No decision has been made to send U.S. forces, but West African nations have made it clear they want the Pentagon's help. African leaders have asked for 2,000 U.S. troops for a peacekeeping mission in Liberia, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has suggested that the United States take a lead role in the strife-ridden nation.



U.S. soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 325th Infantry Regiment, found five mortar tubes, 50 81mm mortars with fuses, 16 to 20 RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] launchers and 30 to 40 RPG rounds. Some of the RPG rounds were still in their original packaging in Baghdad, Iraq, during Operation Desert Scorpion Sting. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Anthony Reinoso, 372nd MPAD

While Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told reporters on Monday that a “range of options” is being considered, military units in Europe are preparing in case they get the call.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Rick Haupt, spokesman for the U.S. European Command, said he could not say, for security reason, what units could go.

“We’re monitoring the situation and standing by for direction from higher authority,” he said.

If President Bush sends troops to the region, it is likely that some or all would come from units stationed in Europe.

EUCOM, which oversees U.S. forces in Europe, has an area of operations that stretches from the North Cape of Norway, through Europe, to parts of the Middle East and most of Africa.

Dozens of European-based troops are in Liberia and Sierra Leone in case the U.S. ambassador in the capital of Monrovia requests the evacuation of American citizens. Last month, U.S. and French forces helped evacuate Americans who wished to leave. The Pentagon called it Operation Shining Express.

While assessment teams have returned to their bases in Europe, the rest of the troops remain in the region to help boost security at diplomatic posts or evacuate Americans, if needed.

Liberia has been in turmoil for more than a decade.

Rebels have waged a three-year battle to oust President Charles Taylor, whom President Bush has urged to step down and allow an interim government to take power. The rebels control more than half of the impoverished country and have battled Taylor's forces for the capital.

Liberia, founded by freed American slaves, is one of Africa's poorest countries, according to the U.S. State Department.

A military mission in Africa would add to a growing list of military operations now conducted by U.S. troops worldwide. In addition to the 6,000 troops in the Balkans, the Pentagon has slightly less than 150,000 troops in Iraq and between 6,000 and 8,000 in Afghanistan. U.S. forces also are in the Horn of Africa as part of the global war on terrorism.



Special Ops samples new field food

by Lisa Burgess, Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — “Field stripping” MREs — harvesting favorite items and chucking the rest — is an art quickly mastered by every servicemember who humps his own supplies in the field.

The practice saves weight, the Holy Grail for field troops. But along with rejected entrees, servicemembers are tossing critical nutrients that give them strength to fight.

Recognizing the dilemma, defense food experts have come up with new combat ration that provides the best of both worlds: “First Strike,” a package of food that weighs half as much as an MRE, but includes enough nutritionally enhanced, tasty fare to sustain a servicemember through 72 hours of high-intensity combat.

And perhaps the best news of all is that the new ration includes only those foods which troops say they like the best, according to Janice Rosado, a physical scientist in the Department of Defense Combat Feeding Directorate at the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center in Natick, Mass.

Even though the new ration isn’t due to hit the field until 2007, it is already a huge hit with the special operations community, which was group chosen to begin field-testing the prototype meal last September.



SFC Charles Nye from 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry, Fort Campbell, holding one of the new MRE packs, during a Sept. 5, 2002, visit to the DOD Combat Feeding Directorate ration display room at the US Army Soldier Systems Center. Courtesy of US Army Soldier Systems Center

Now special operations commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan are calling and e-mailing the directorate with a single request.

“Send us thousands” of First Strike rations, Rosado said in a Tuesday telephone interview.

What makes the new rations so popular with testers?

To begin with, there’s “the backbone” of First Strike, a trio of shelf-stable pocket sandwiches that can be held in one hand and consumed on the go.

Flavors include barbecue chicken, barbecue and a new bacon-cheddar “that’s more like something you would eat for breakfast,” Rosado said. (The same sandwiches are also scheduled to make their way into regular MREs in the next two years).

Next, the new rations feature two different kinds of food bars: miniature Army HooAH! sports bars, which come in chocolate,



The dough balls and dollops of barbecue chicken are from a session of pocket sandwich production in the Combat Feeding Food Engineering Lab at the US Army Soldier Systems Center, Natick, Mass. Courtesy of US Army Soldier Systems Center

peanut butter, apple-cinnamon, raspberry and cran-raspberry flavors; and a creamy, milk-based, dessert-like treat bar that comes in chocolate, peanut butter, mocha, banana nut, vanilla nut, vanilla and strawberry flavors.

The Hooah bars (each ration has two) provide carbohydrates and vitamins, while the single dairy bar adds protein and calcium to the ration.

First Strike rations also include cheese spread, in one of three flavors: plain and jalapeno, which troops now savor in MREs, and brand-new bacon-cheddar.



The components photo shows the mix of items in the new ration. Courtesy of US Army Soldier Systems Center

Cheese spread is something of a fetish among deployed servicemembers, who have been known to come to blows in the field over who will get one of the prized MRE meals that include it.

“We’ve heard of soldiers who say, ‘I’ll take a bullet for you, but don’t take my jalapeno cheese spread’.”

Other First Strike items include a sports drink powder called ERGO, for “Energy Rich, Glucose Optimized;” “Zapplesauce,” which is applesauce fortified with energy producing maltodextrin; two beef

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A US soldier guards suspected looters who were caught while pillaging an ammunition depot near Hadithah 240 kilometers (150 miles) northwest of Baghdad, Iraq on Tuesday July 1, 2003. A massive explosion over the weekend at this ammunition bunker near Hadithah killed at least 15 people and injured at least four when metal scavengers allegedly triggered the explosion while dismantling 155 mm artillery rounds, spreading gun powder on the ground at the depot. The depot housed old Iraqi artillery. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

Special Ops samples new field food continued

jerky strips, crackers or bread, dried fruit, mixed nuts, and an accessories packet with a zip-lock baggie and not one, but two wet wipes — another soldier request.

Researchers are considering adding additional performance foods to the First Strike package, including caffeinated chewing gum (which will be field tested this fall); packets of sports energy gels like the kind now used by long-distance runners; or protein drinks or bars.

Feeding directorate officials decided to unveil the new ration first to the special operations community, whose personnel are constantly in the field.

The first servicemembers to field test the new ration was Army Special Forces, some of whom who took First Strike to Afghanistan in September 2002.

In April, Navy SEALs took First Strike test meals on a “black operation,” or classified mission to an unspecified part of the world.

The feedback from all of the commando units “has been excellent,” Rosado said.

In fact, the special operators are so entranced with the rations that the U.S. Army Special Operations Support Command has asked for a regular supply for Rangers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

But full production is four years down the road, and there’s no way the feeding directorate can produce the rations in such large quantities without help from outside manufacturers, Rosado said.

“Everything we’ve field tested [to date], we made in-house,” in the directorate’s Food Engineering Lab, Rosado said.

Rosado said she did not know if the ration’s instant popularity might prompt defense officials to speed up DOD’s time-consuming

product development and procurement process.

“I guess anything can happen,” Rosado said. “But we can only control our end,” which is product development.

“Then it’s really up to industry and the [defense] procurement agency to take it from there.”



FIREWORKS — A British C-130J aircraft launches a display of flare countermeasures just prior to being the first coalition aircraft to land on the newly reopened military runway at Baghdad International Airport, July 1, 2003. Coalition aircraft bombed the runway during the war. Thanks to the help of the U.S. Air Force 1st Expeditionary Red Horse Group and the 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, the runway is once again operational. The British aircraft was delivering cargo and passengers to Baghdad in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Robert R. Hargreaves Jr



A US soldier is surrounded by children as he distributes a local newspaper called Al-Iraq Al-Yoom, or Iraq Today, printed by Iraqi journalists in Fallujah, a restive town 55 kilometers, 35 miles, west of Baghdad, Iraq, Wednesday July 2, 2003. (AP Photo/Saurabh Das)



Palestinian special forces police march during a morning training session in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, Wednesday July 2, 2003. Palestinian police are preparing to move back into the streets of Bethlehem, the second area Israel is turning over under a U.S.-backed Mideast peace plan. The handover will come after an upbeat summit between the Israeli and Palestinian premiers boosted hope for an end to 33 months of bloodshed. The writing on the flags reads in Arabic "the special forces, the central forces". (AP Photo/Muhammed Muheisen)



US Army Cpt. Steve Smith, left, from Colorado Springs, CO and Spc. Eric Jeffords from New York, both with the 1st Squadron 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment survey an ammunition bunker at Hadithah 240 kilometers (150 miles) northwest of Baghdad, Iraq on Tuesday July 1, 2003. A massive explosion over the weekend at this ammunition bunker near Hadithah killed at least 15 people and injured at least four when metal scavengers allegedly triggered the explosion while dismantling 155 mm artillery rounds, spreading gun powder on the ground at the depot. The depot housed old Iraqi artillery. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

